

Restoring a Sense of Place in Seattle's Nihonmachi
Draft Document for Public Comment
Comments due November 1, 2003



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Sponsored by:
Inter*Im Community Development Association
CityDesign, Department of Design, Construction, and Land Use, City of Seattle
Historic Preservation Program, Department of Neighborhoods, City of Seattle
The Preservation Planning and Design Program at the University of Washington

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Bon Odori Festival at Sixth and South Main Street. Courtesy of the Archives of the Seattle Buddhist Temple.

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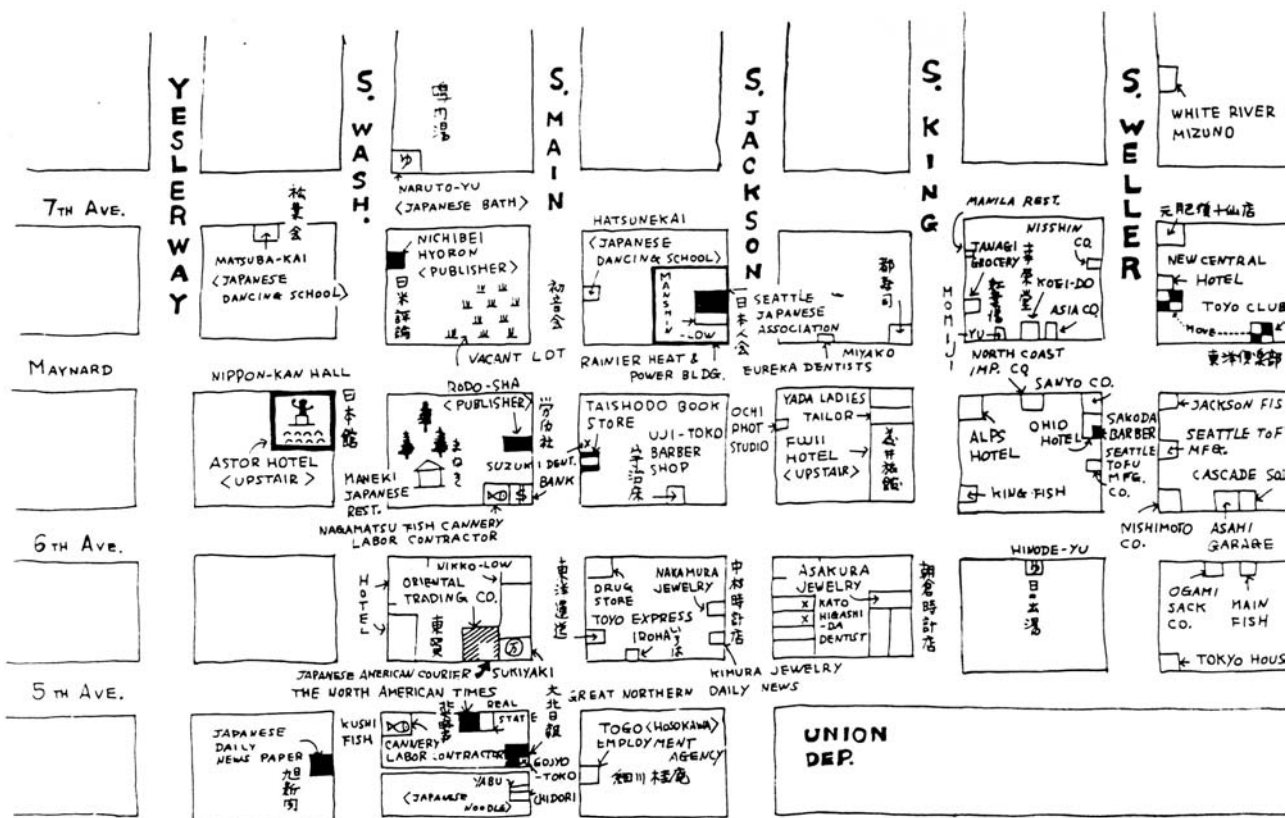
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Introduction



Kazuo Ito's hand drawn map of Seattle's Nihonmachi as it was in the pre-WW II period. (1969)

This charrette was intended to generate ideas that restore and enhance the sense of place in Seattle's historic Nihonmachi (Japantown). It is particularly apt that we gathered to do this work at Sixth and South Main, which served as the epicenter of Japanese American community life from the turn of the century to the forced removal and internment of people of Japanese descent during World War II. While the district has continued to be the home to a pan-Asian community, the historic fabric of Seattle's Japanese American community has never regained the sense of identity and vitality that it enjoyed before the war.

In recent years, the National Park Service (NPS) along with state and local preservation agencies have reassessed the significance and integrity of the Japanese American cultural resources in Seattle, finding a cluster of nationally significant historic properties with high integrity that may be eligible for National Historic Landmark status. These include the Panama Hotel, which possesses the oldest intact example of a sento (Japanese public bathhouse); Nippon Kan Theatre (Japanese community theater and meeting hall); as well as other significant examples of important building types, such as Kokugo Gakko, the earliest Japanese language school in America.

While each of these resources was listed on the National Register as part of the Chinatown/International District nomination, their inclusion in a nomination focused on pan-Asian resources obscured the extraordinary cluster of Japanese American properties that remain. In truth, Seattle's Japantown compares favorably with Los Angeles' Little Tokyo, a designated National Historic Landmark (NHL) District, in terms of significance and integrity. The problem, however, is that the historic center of Seattle's Nihonmachi has suffered from an erosion of identity over time and there have been no focused preservation and development initiatives around the concept of celebrating the extraordinary cluster of Japanese American resources that remain. To begin to remedy these oversights, the NPS has funded the preparation of NHL nominations for two of the most significant properties, including the Panama Hotel's Hashidate-Yu and Nippon Kan Hall. This charrette was intended to explore a wider set of actions that will strengthen the visibility and identity of Seattle's Nihonmachi.

The successful opening of the Panama Tea and Coffee House at Sixth and South Main, by Jan Johnson, and the refurbishing of the NP Hotel by Inter*Im, as well as the continuing vitality of Danny Woo Community Garden, have persuaded many disbelievers that renewed vitality is possible at this location. This project builds on a growing level of public interest in the site, as well as publicity generated by a recent book by Gail Dubrow with Donna Graves, *Sento at Sixth and Main: Preserving Landmarks of Japanese American Heritage*, published in 2002 by the Seattle Arts Commission and distributed by the University of Washington Press. Thus, the timing is excellent for bringing new attention to these resources.

This charrette focused the energies of planners, urban designers, architects, landscape architects, and preservationists, among others, on the site of Sixth and South Main as well as the surrounding community. The University of Washington's Preservation Planning and Design Program partnered with Inter*Im and CityDesign to hold the day-long event, in consultation with the City of Seattle's Historic Preservation Program.

Financial support for the charrette was provided by a Preservation Services Fund grant from the Western Office of the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the University of Washington's Royalty Research Fund, with additional in-kind support from local partners, such as Inter*Im, CityDesign, Uwajimaya, the Panama Hotel and the Seattle Chinatown International District Preservation and Development Authority. A special thanks goes to Nancy Shoji for providing her teriyaki.

Intended as a forum and catalyst for preserving Seattle's historic Nihonmachi, the findings are meant to educate Seattleites about the significance of the place while building a constituency for preservation-oriented public and private investment. This draft report of background and findings from this event will be circulated to concerned individuals and community organizations for comment. A final report, which incorporates these additional comments, will be issued by December 2003.

Gail Dubrow

Professor of Architecture, Landscape Architecture, Urban Design and Planning
Director of the Preservation Planning and Design Program, University of Washington.

Charrette Participants



CityDesign

The City of Seattle established CityDesign to be a catalyst for design excellence in all aspects of the public realm. In partnership with the Seattle Design Commission and Design Review Program, CityDesign provides the design leadership, project review, and design education to reach this goal as we step into the 21st century.

Inter*Im

Inter*Im Community Development Association is a comprehensive community development corporation in the business of promoting, advocating, and revitalizing the ID and other Asian Pacific communities in the Puget Sound area for the benefit of low- and moderate-income residents and community business owners.

Historic Preservation Program, Department of Neighborhoods

The City of Seattle's Historic Preservation Program, located in the Department of Neighborhoods is responsible for the designation and protection of more than 230 historic structures, sites, objects, and vessels, as well as seven historic districts scattered throughout Seattle. The program staff work closely with citizens, residents, businesses, and property owners on their concerns and needs involving historic landmarks and districts.

University of Washington Preservation Planning and Design Program

The College of Architecture and Urban Planning at the University of Washington offers students the opportunity to earn a Certificate in Preservation Planning & Design in conjunction with a graduate degree in Architecture, Landscape Architecture, or Urban Planning. This program addresses preservation issues in the context of professional planning and design education to prepare professionals in these fields to bring informed judgment to the management of cultural resources. In more than a decade of work, the Preservation Planning and Design Program has placed special emphasis on ensuring future practitioners contribute to the preservation of cultural diversity. In addition to preparing national, state, and local plans for protecting the heritage of underrepresented groups, faculty and students have authored NHL nominations. Current efforts are focused on developing a historic context document for properties associated with Cesar Chavez and the Farmworkers' Movement and Agricultural Labor History in the Western Region.

Charrette Participants

Dan Abramson is Assistant Professor of Urban Design and Planning at the UW. He is on a team of UW researchers engaged with the Chinatown/Nihonmachi/Little Saigon - International District Urban Design Master Planning process. He has traveled widely in Asia, and he lived and studied in Beijing, China and Vancouver Canada, before joining the UW faculty in 2001.

Steven Arai AIA, a Partner with Arai/Jackson Architects and Planners, is a life-long resident of Seattle. He has been active in both local and national Asian community issues, currently serving as a Trustee of the Japanese

American National Museum in Los Angeles. He is a committed advocate of historic preservation, serving on the Council of Historic Seattle Preservation and Development Authority for the past twenty years. Steve is also immediate past President of AIA Seattle.

Michael Buhler is the Regional Attorney/Program Officer, Western Office of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. He is responsible for delivering field services to Idaho, California and Washington, and acts as the office liaison on legal issues throughout the western region. Mr. Buhler received a J.D. from Santa Clara University School of Law in Santa Clara, California, and is admitted to the State Bar of California. He also holds a B.A. in History from the University of Washington in Seattle.

Carol Bushar is a recent graduate of the University of Washington's Department of Urban Design and Planning, and the Daniel J. Evans School of Public Affairs. She is interested in preserving the stories of forgotten voices.

Frank Ching is Professor of Architecture at the University of Washington and the author and illustrator of several design texts.

Layne Cubell is on staff at CityDesign, the urban design office for the City of Seattle housed within the Department of Design, Construction and Land Use. She coordinates the work of the Seattle Design Commission and is involved in education and outreach programs.

Ben Dayot AIA, has been an Associate with Arai/Jackson for the past fourteen years. Born in Manila, PI, he lived in Bagiuo until moving to Pullman in the sixth grade where his father served as a Professor of Electrical Engineering at WSU. A senior designer at Arai/Jackson, he has led the design of a broad diversity of community-based public architecture from civic buildings to transportation facilities. A bicycle advocate, Ben volunteers for Bikeworks, a nonprofit that promotes biking for youth, especially disadvantaged youth.

Gail Dubrow is Professor of Architecture, Landscape Architecture, Urban Design and Planning at the University of Washington, where she also serves as Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Director of the Preservation Planning and Design Program. She is the author, with Donna Graves, of *Sento at Sixth and Main: Preserving Landmarks of Japanese American Heritage* (Seattle Arts Commission, 2002) and the editor, with Jennifer Goodman, of *Restoring Women's History through Historic Preservation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003).

Tom Eanes AIA, APA, ASLA is Principal in charge of the Seattle office of Pyatok Architects. The firm primarily does housing by nonprofit developers for low-income families including rental, special needs and first-time home buyers. They also specialize in community planning. They are the architects for Main Street Family Housing, to be located on Main and Maynard. It will include 50 units of family housing with a small amount of commercial space.

Barbara Gray is an urban planner with thirteen years of professional experience in community design and transportation planning. She currently works for the Seattle Department of Transportation leading the effort to update the City street design manual and transportation strategic plan. Barbara's areas of expertise include urban design, street design for pedestrian and bicycle safety and access, land use planning, transit-oriented development, and neighborhood planning.

Michael Horner is a student at the Daniel J. Evans School of Public Affairs at the University of Washington. He works at Inter*Im Community Development Association as an intern and enjoys the International District very much. He grew up in Seattle and graduated from Garfield High School. He attended Central Washington University and graduated with a B.A. in geography. He moved back to Seattle after volunteering in Americorps as a high school teacher in Kansas City, MO.

Jeff Hou teaches community design and landscape architecture at University of Washington. His studio participated in the urban design planning process in the International District.

Tom Im has worked at Inter*Im Community Development Association for almost six years as a Community Planner. He has worked on land use, urban design and transportation issues while working at Inter*Im. He has also served on a few city-wide committees, like the Citizen's Review Team of the Neighborhood Matching Fund while working in

Charrette Participants

Seattle. Before working at Inter*Im, Tom was a graduate student in Urban Planning and Political Science at the University of British Columbia and University of Hawaii-Manoa, respectively.

Marcia Iwasaki is a project manager in the Public Art Program with the Mayor's Office of Arts & Cultural Affairs (formerly the Seattle Arts Commission). She manages projects involving artistic residencies within city departments, site-integrated artworks, design-team collaborations and community based projects. In Boston, Marcia worked at the Children's Museum – Harvard East Asian Program, and was one of the founders for a city-wide Dragon Boat Festival.

Jan Johnson is the third owner and operator of the Panama Hotel. Five generations of her relatives have lived in the Seattle area. She began studying art at Cornish when she was 9 years old. She is committed to making Japantown a vibrant community.

Ken Katahira is the Development Director at Inter*Im Community Development Association, and has overseen the development of affordable housing projects in the ID, including projects in the Nihonmachi area – the historic NP Hotel, and a new planned family housing development.

Kathleen Kern is a Doctoral Candidate in Urban Design and Planning at the University of Washington whose research focus is the street as public space. As an urban designer, she has worked with CityDesign on revising Seattle's Street Improvement Manual.

Rob Ketcherside moved to the International District three years ago to enjoy the dense businesses and access to transit. Although a software engineer by trade, he serves on the city's Pedestrian Advisory Board, and is interested in transportation and urban design issues. He finds it intriguing that Japan was undergoing the Meiji Restoration just as Seattle was forming as a city and taking in its first Japanese immigrants.

Neil King has worked for the National Park Service for 34 years. Currently, he is Superintendent for Minidoka Internment National Monument, Idaho and leads the planning process that is underway to define how that site will be managed for future generations. He is also working on the Special Resource Study, requested by Congress for the Eagledale Site at Taylor Avenue on Bainbridge Island, which will develop recommendations for long term management of that site.

Nicole Kistler is an Associate with Nakano Associates and worked with the community organization, Inter*Im, on the draft of the most recent Streetscape and Open Space Plan for the International District. When she moved to Seattle eight years ago, Uwajimaya was a big adventure. Now she can tell you something about almost every place to eat in the ID, the street widths of most streets, and has become a veritable encyclopedia of ID facts. She's still amazed at how much more there is to learn.

Alan Kurimura is Vice President for Corporate and Community Development with Uwajimaya. Born and raised in Seattle, he spent 25 years in state and city government, five of which were with the International District Neighborhood Strategy Area Program. The infusion of public funding in this period resulted in many improvements to the International District, including the Danny Woo Community Garden and the rehabilitation of a number of historic buildings.

Lynne Manzo is a faculty member in the Department of Landscape Architecture at the University of Washington. She has a PhD in Environmental Psychology and has been conducting research in the Chinatown-International District for the past year and a half.

Leslie Morishita is a housing planner and developer at Inter*Im Community Development Association. She received a Master of Architecture from the University of Washington in 1991.

Andy Muzuki works for the Chinatown International District Preservation and Development Authority.

Gail Nomura is an assistant professor in the Department of American Ethnic Studies at the University of Washington. Her publications include works on Asian American history, particularly in the Pacific Northwest, and on Asian American women's history.

Anna O'Connell recently completed her graduate education in landscape architecture at the University of Washington. She has an undergraduate degree in environmental biology/ecology and has been working as a planning intern with CityDesign for the past year.

John Rahaim is the Founding Executive Director of CityDesign, Seattle's office of Urban Design founded in 1999, and is the Executive Director of the Seattle Design Commission, the City's primary design advisory panel for public projects and related urban design initiatives. He currently sits on the board of Consolidated Works, a contemporary arts center, and the editorial committee of Arcade Magazine.

“Uncle Bob” Santos is the Executive Director of Inter*Im. He grew up living in room 306 of the NP Hotel, a building that Inter*Im now owns. Inter*Im also operates its offices in a storefront space in the same building. He plans to have his last whiskey on the rocks someday in the lounge of the Maneki Restaurant which is also in the NP Hotel. Talk about one a stop shop.

Robert Scully is an urban designer with CityDesign and the Department of Design, Construction and Land Use at the City of Seattle where he manages special projects including the Blue Ring Strategy, the Center City Wayfinding Project and the Westlake Avenue Design Project. Prior to joining CityDesign, he was a project manager with the City's Neighborhood Planning Office.

Mimi Sheridan is an historic preservation and planning consultant working with governments, communities and private clients in the Puget Sound area. She received her Master of Urban Planning degree from the University of Washington, with an emphasis on historic preservation and urban design.

Michael Sullivan, of Artifacts Consulting, is an historian and historic preservationist interested in architecture and the built environment. He is an adjunct faculty at the University of Washington Tacoma and teaches courses in Pacific Northwest history and urban studies.

Rick Sundberg, FAIA, is a principal in Olson Sunberg Kundig Allen Architects. He is fascinated with urban settings and the mystery of what make cities work. Rick formerly chaired the Seattle Design Commission and currently serves as a board member of the Seattle Popular Monorail Committee.

Sharon E. Sutton, Ph.D., FAIA is Professor of Architecture, Urban Design and Planning, Adjunct Professor of Social Work, Director of CEEDS (Center for Environment, Education, and Design Studies) at the University of Washington and member of the Seattle Design Commission.

Eugenia Woo is a Preservation Planner with the City of Seattle Department of Neighborhoods, Historic Preservation Program. She coordinates two historic districts, the International Special Review District and the Columbia City Landmark District. Prior to her current position, Eugenia was an Associate Preservation Planner with Historic Resources Group in Los Angeles.

Jim Yamaguchi is a Senior Associate with Nakano Associates and worked as Project Manager on the draft of the streetscape and open space master plan for the International District. Jim has a particular interest in Nihonmachi, since he grew up there. Taking a walk with Jim on Main Street, one sees not only the urban landscape through the eyes of a landscape architect, one sees through the eyes of a child who knows the best places to see a view of the Sound, which hotels his friends live in and the best places to build a fort.

Pauline Zeestraten is Executive Director of the Chinatown-International District Business Improvement Area, a nonprofit community development organization funded by businesses and property owners.